

HUMAN

TRAFFICKING IN ASSAM

MAP THE SYSTEM 2022



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WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING ?

Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. Men, women, and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world. The traffickers often use violence or fraudulent employment agencies and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick and/or coerce their victims (UNODC).

Forms of Human Trafficking



Sexual Exploitation



Forced Labor



Domestic Servitude



Debt Bondage



Organ Removal



Forced Begging



Child Soldiers



Forced Marriage

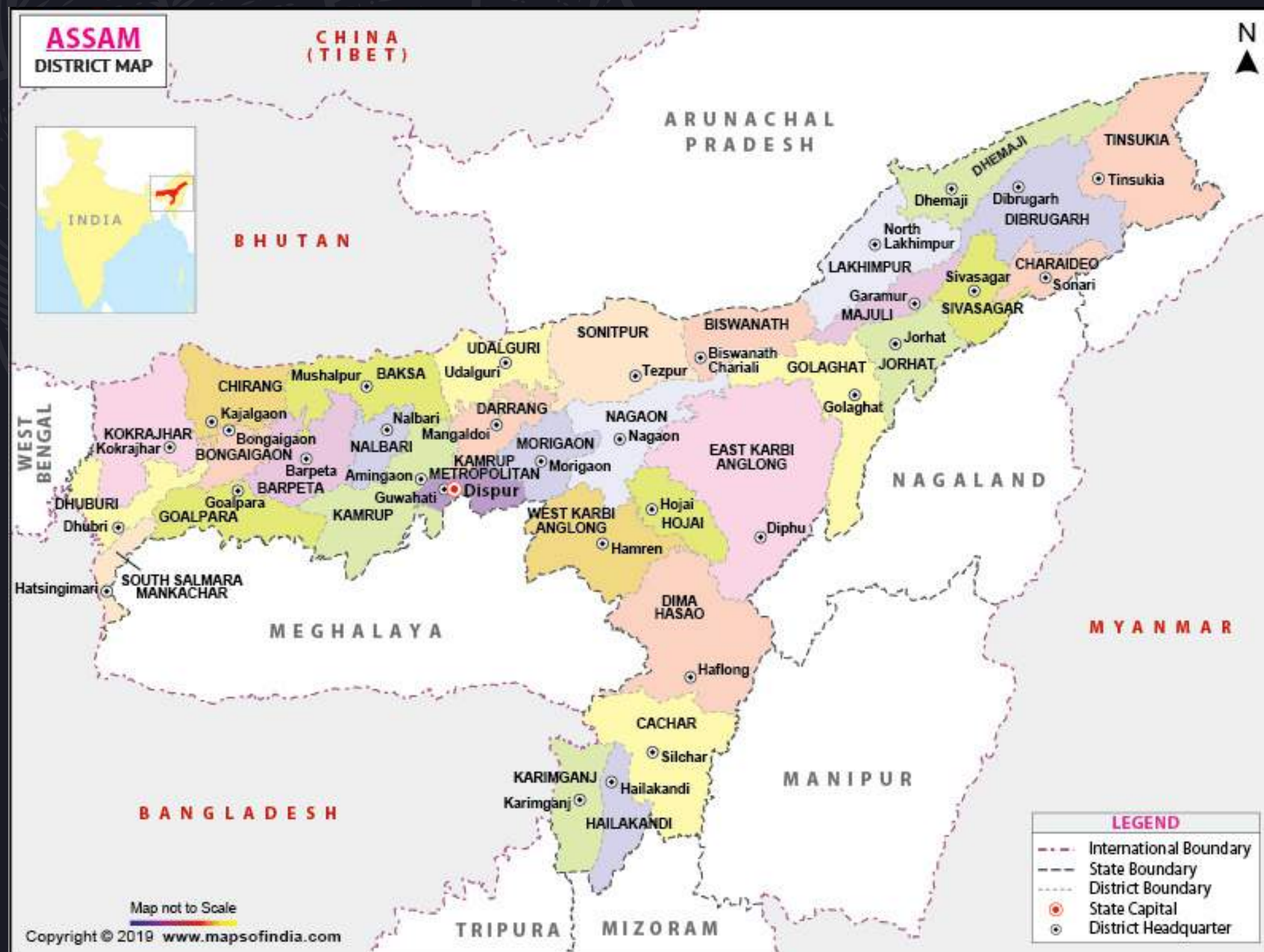
Traffickers target vulnerable communities, and especially women and children, in **source/origin states or countries**, which have conducive environments to undertake trafficking through the process of recruitment, force, coercion, abduction, deception, feign love, false promise of marriage, and providing document forgery.

Traffickers, personally or with the help of other actors, transport victims through **transit states or countries**, which refers to the states or countries that make up the inter-state or transnational route by which a victim is transported from their source/origin state or country to a destination state or country determined by the traffickers.

Trafficking happens due to the demand from **destination states or countries**, which is the final location where the victim may end up suffering from any of the various forms of trafficking.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ASSAM

Figure 1: Map of Assam, with a reference to its geographic positionality to other states in India and neighbouring countries



Statistics don't tell us the complete story.

Human trafficking statistics in Assam fail to represent an accurate portrayal of the problem due to underreporting of cases. Yet, these numbers are often used to replace real stories and survivors.

0

convictions in human trafficking cases in 2020

124

cases of human trafficking reported in 2021

Capital: Dispur

Districts: 27

Population: 31 million

Rural population: 26.8 million

Sex Ratio: 1012/1000

Literacy Rate: 72.19%

55%

increase in child trafficking cases in 2019

2nd

ranked state in India for crimes against women

WHY DO SURVIVOR STORIES MATTER ?

Trafficking survivors are socially stigmatized as their identity is often reduced to the single event of trafficking. However, they are individuals who, like many of us, possess economic aspirations and seek opportunities to fulfil them. Traffickers, by utilizing the power imbalances between them and their targets, exploit the economic aspirations of already vulnerable groups and individuals. Thus, it is crucial to view survivors and at-risk groups not as victims of trafficking, but as individuals with agency, aspirations, and the capability to serve as value additions to the society.

Survivor Stories

“

Our area was infamous for kidnapping and trafficking. Girls who were rescued were stigmatized and faced discrimination within our community. When I was younger, I saw my father struggling to support our family and my education. He wanted me to attend a local private school, but my mother never supported the idea. I was lured with the promise of a good life, with a proper job, a handsome salary, and free lodging. When my father tried to register a case with the police, he was told to be patient as I probably would have eloped with some man. After I went to a nearby town to meet the trafficker, he drugged me and kept me unconscious for a week. I was sold to a family in Shahabad and married to a stranger. I tried to make the buyers believe that I wouldn't flee and found a chance to escape.

”



Survivor 1

AGE: 15

SOURCE STATE: DHUBRI, ASSAM

DESTINATION STATE: SHAHADABAD, HARYANA



Survivor 2

AGE: 13

SOURCE STATE: KARIMGANJ, ASSAM

DESTINATION STATE: JIND, HARYANA

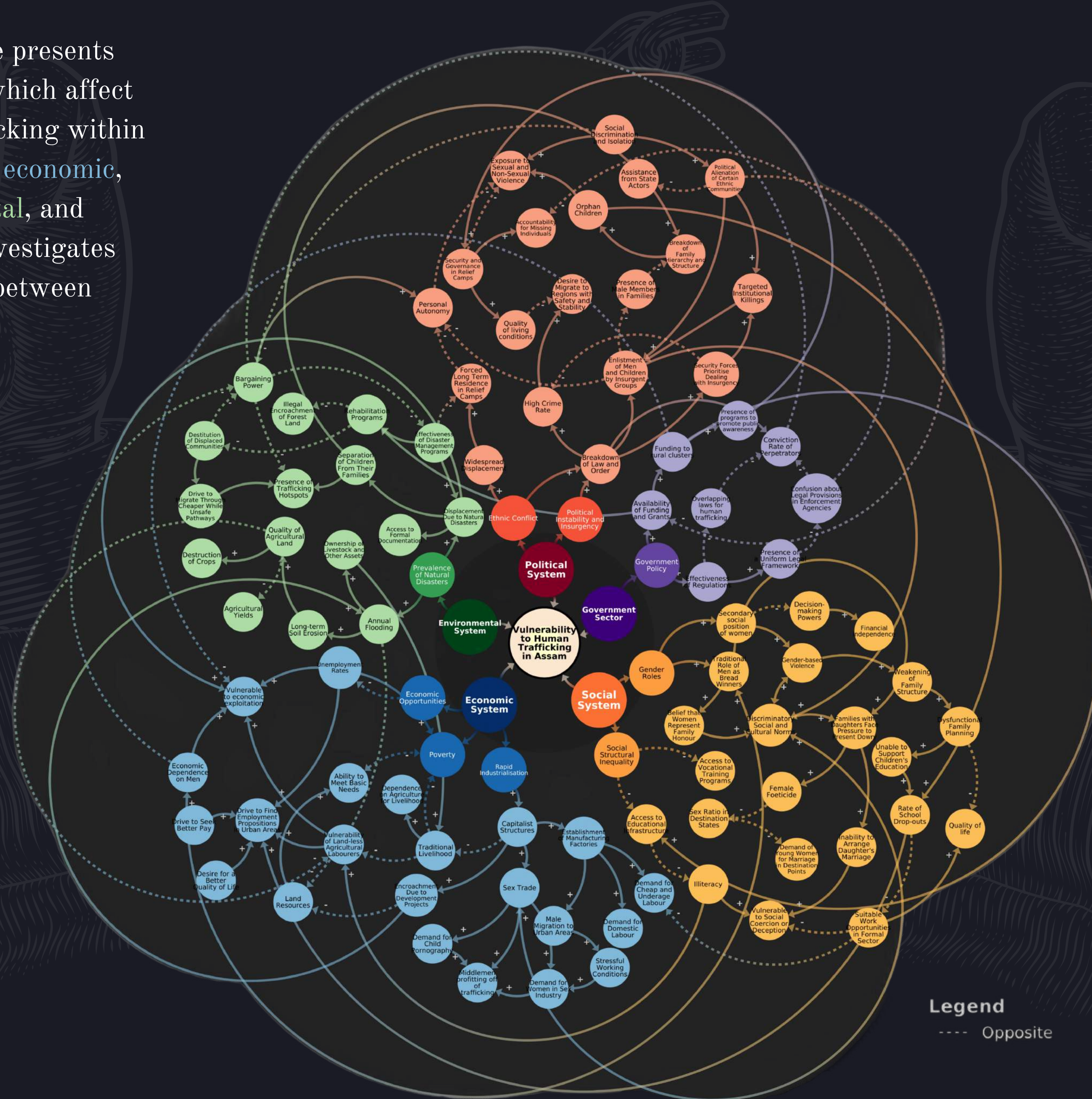
“

I was living with my relatives in Katabari when I met him. He befriended me and told me he will take me on a road trip. After I agreed to go on a trip with him, he sold me in Jind for INR 3,00,000 to a man in the town. In a joint operation of Assam state police and Haryana police, they rescued me and arrested the trafficker and the man I was sold to. I was repatriated by the police and filed an application for victim compensation which is still pending with the district legal service authority.

”

UNPACKING STORIES - THE SYSTEM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

This systems map the presents the multiple drivers which affect vulnerability to trafficking within each system – **social**, **economic**, **political**, **environmental**, and **institutional** – and investigates the interconnections between these drivers.



[Click here to view a zoomable version in high definition](#)

ROOT CAUSES FOR TRAFFICKING IN ASSAM

Our analysis of social, economic, and environmental systems informed us that gender discrimination, breakdown of family structure, and poverty and unemployment are the most pervasive factors that cause vulnerability to trafficking in Assam. This stock and flow diagram investigates the constraints presented by these factors and presents potential mitigating strategies.

Legend

- Adds to / same direction
- Subtracts from / opposite direction

Constraints

- Conflict and Insurgency**: During conflicts and insurgency, men and children are often recruited as members of the insurgent groups, leaving the female members in a vulnerable social position.
- Natural Disaster**: Due to the large-scale displacement caused by floods, many families are separated post floods or in relief camps that are hunting ground for traffickers.
- Gender Discrimination**: Violence against women and disregard of their personal autonomy during trafficking reinforces the secondary social position of women.
- Poverty and Unemployment**: Due to the stigma prevalent against victims of human trafficking, many victims are not able to reintegrate in society. Not only do they lose access to any resources they had earlier, but also the economic safety net of being a community member.

Mitigating Strategies

- By communicating openly and imparting awareness about physical and digital safety, parents can decrease the vulnerability of their child being trafficked.**
- Promotion of gender equity practices and norms will allow women to explore non-domestic roles and become primary stakeholders in their physical and economic well-being, thus decreasing their vulnerability to trafficking.**
- Increasing sustainable sources of livelihood within the local economy and introducing social welfare schemes to uplift families living below poverty line would increase economic security and decrease chances of trafficking.**

Stocks

- Breakdown of Family Structure**
- Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in Assam**

Flows

- Conflict and Insurgency** → **Breakdown of Family Structure** (+)
- Natural Disaster** → **Breakdown of Family Structure** (+)
- Breakdown of Family Structure** → **Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in Assam** (+)
- Gender Discrimination** → **Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in Assam** (+)
- Poverty and Unemployment** → **Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in Assam** (+)
- Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in Assam** → **Gender Discrimination** (+)
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Constraints (Orange Boxes):

- Conflict and Insurgency:** During conflicts and insurgency, men and children are often recruited as members of the insurgent groups, leaving the female members in a vulnerable social position.
- Natural Disaster:** Due to the large-scale displacement caused by floods, many families are separated post floods or in relief camps that are hunting ground for traffickers.
- Cognisant of relief camps:** Cognisant of relief camps being a hunting ground for traffickers, parents often send their children to cities without any familial safety net for protection.
- Violence against women:** Violence against women and disregard of their personal autonomy during trafficking reinforces the secondary social position of women.
- Gender Discrimination:** Due to the stigma prevalent against victims of human trafficking, many victims are not able to reintegrate in society. Not only do they lose access to any resources they had earlier, but also the economic safety net of being a community member.
- Poverty and Unemployment:** Increasing sustainable sources of livelihood within the local economy and introducing social welfare schemes to uplift families living below poverty line would increase economic security and decrease chances of trafficking.

Mitigating Strategies (Green Boxes):

- By communicating openly:** By communicating openly and imparting awareness about physical and digital safety, parents can decrease the vulnerability of their child being trafficked.
- Promotion of gender equity:** Promotion of gender equity practices and norms will allow women to explore non-domestic roles and become primary stakeholders in their physical and economic well-being, thus decreasing their vulnerability to trafficking.

Central Stock: Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in Assam

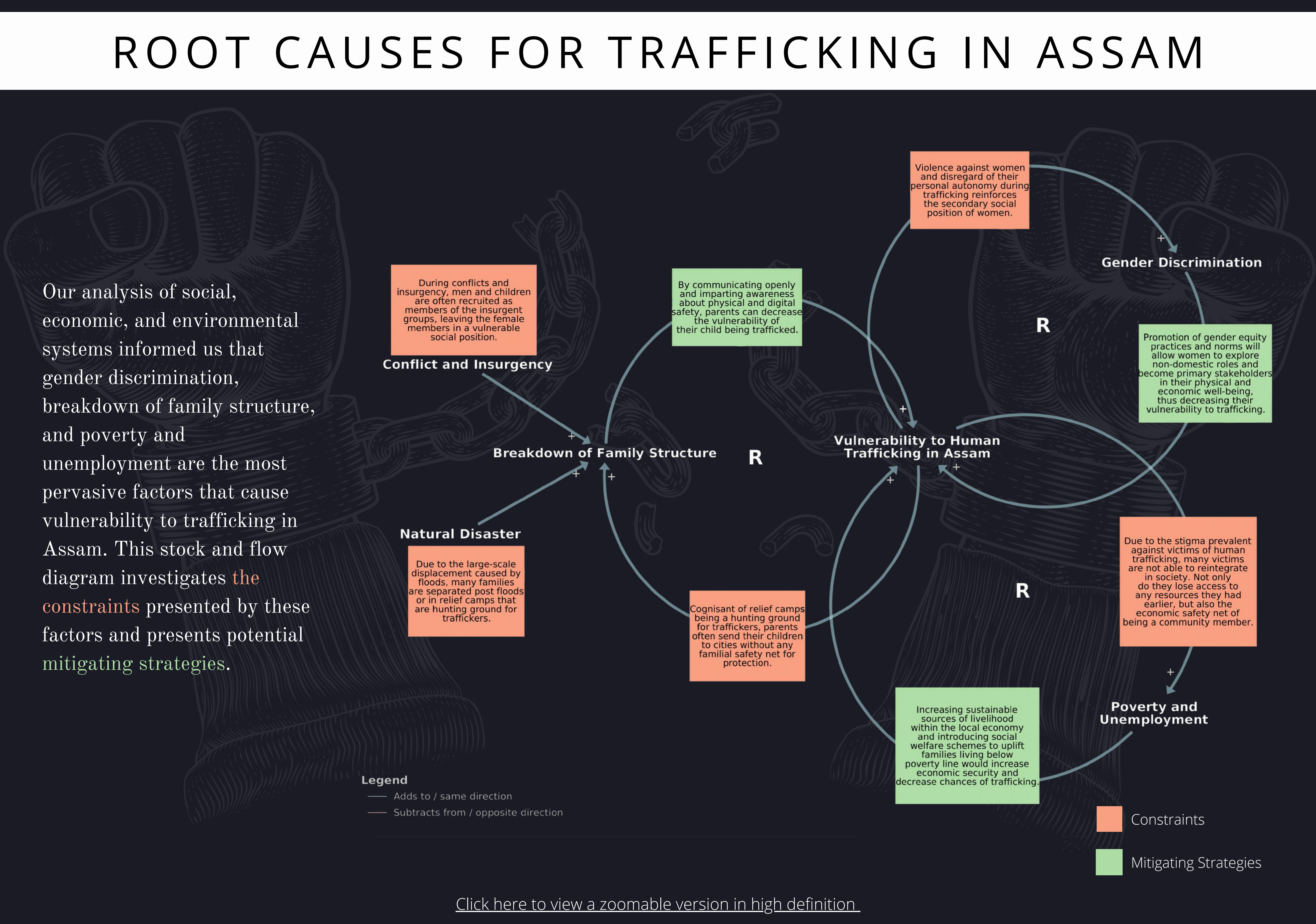
Flows:

- Breakdown of Family Structure** (Adds to)
- Gender Discrimination** (Adds to)
- Poverty and Unemployment** (Adds to)

Feedback Loops (R):

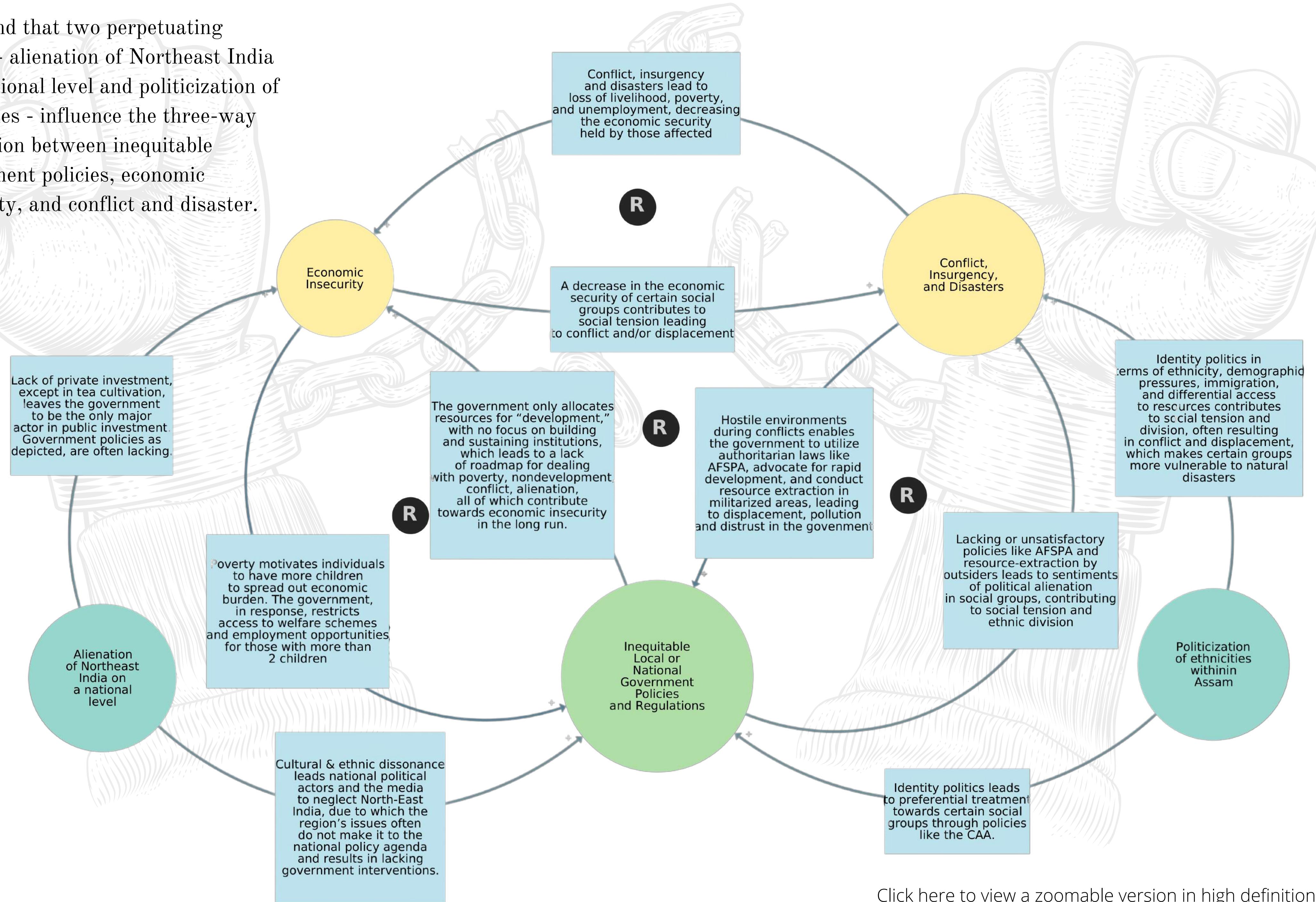
- By communicating openly** (Subtracts from)
- Promotion of gender equity** (Subtracts from)
- Increasing sustainable sources of livelihood** (Subtracts from)

[Click here to view a zoomable version in high definition](#)



GOVT. POLICIES AND OTHER PERPETUATING FACTORS

We found that two perpetuating factors - alienation of Northeast India on a national level and politicization of ethnicities - influence the three-way interaction between inequitable government policies, economic insecurity, and conflict and disaster.

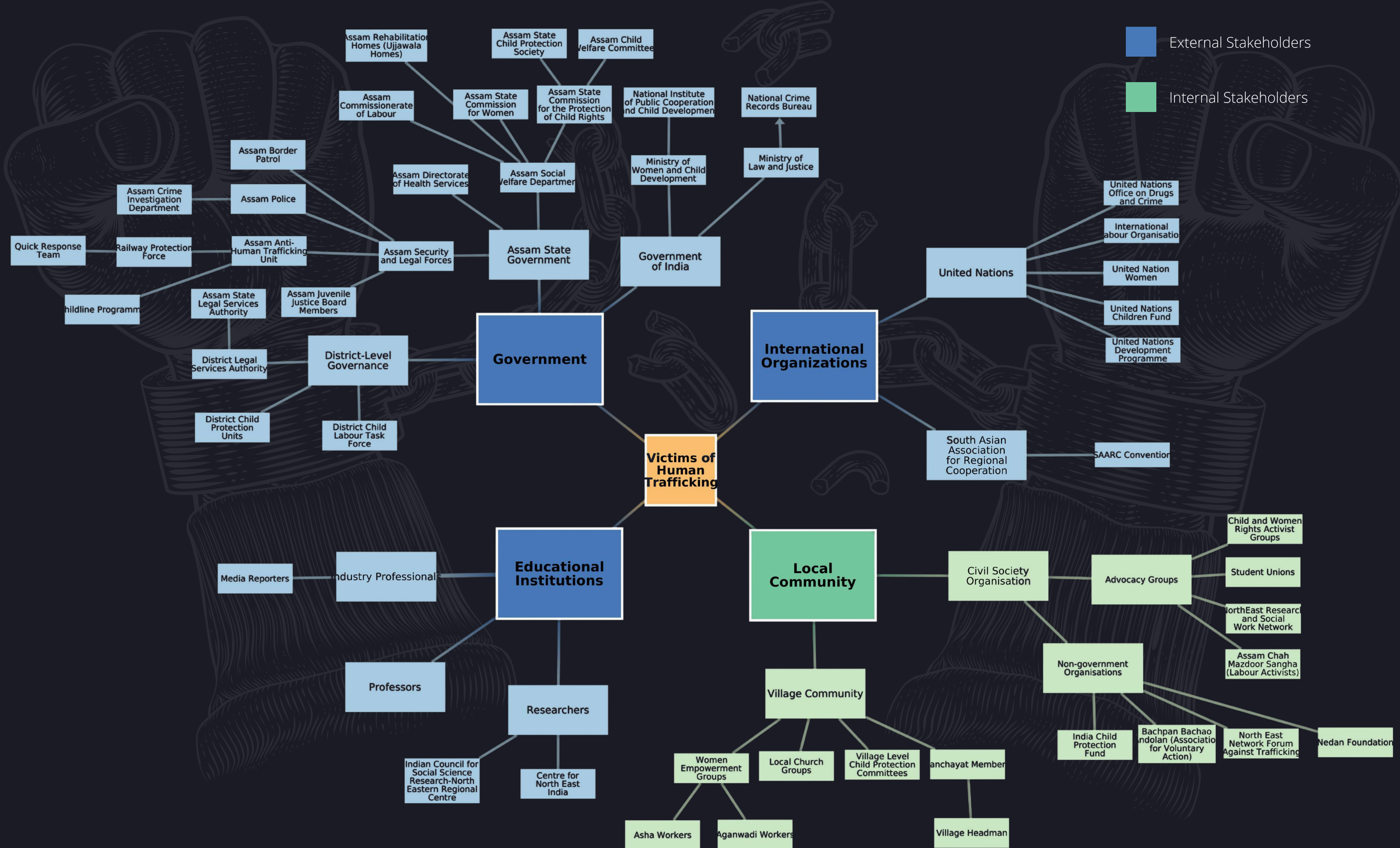


BEYOND VULNERABILITY: WHAT ENABLES TRAFFICKERS?

Through this iceberg model, we tried to understand the mental models, structures, behavior patterns and events focusing on the traffickers to answer a critical question: Why traffickers traffic and what power-dynamics enable them?

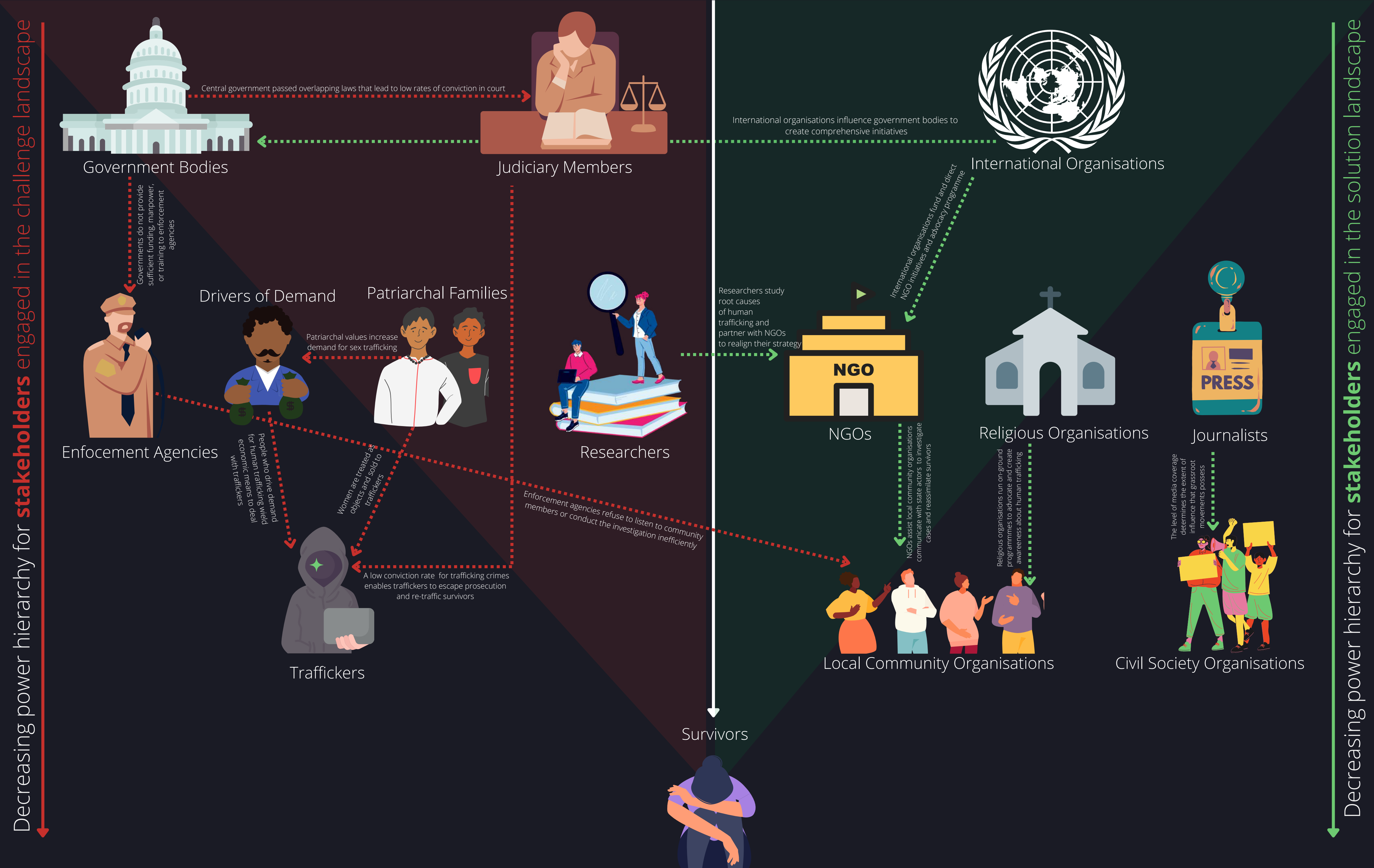


KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOR SOLUTION LANDSCAPE



[Click here to view a zoomable version in high definition.](#)

POWER DYNAMICS BETWEEN KEY STAKEHOLDERS

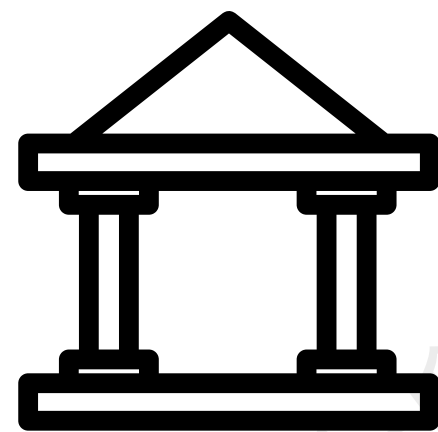


SOLUTIONS LANDSCAPE



Central Government Policies

- Anti-Trafficking Cell
- Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs)
- Ujjwala Scheme
- Mission Vatsalya, formerly ICPS
- IPC: Sections 370-370A, 372-373, 366, 374
- Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA) 1956
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015
- Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act (BLSAA) (1976)
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO)
- Contract Labor (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970
- Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986
- Goa Children's Act 2003
- Prevention of Begging Act 1952
- Other related laws



State government policies

- AHTUs created and organized in various districts
- 63 Women Cells
- Task Force Coordination Committee
- Establish dial 100 facility with Quick Reaction Teams (QRT)
- Virangana women commando police
- Conducted Secondary Data Analysis with UNICEF and the Social Welfare Department to identify source areas for Human Trafficking
- Family Counseling Centers
- Special Police Offices for ITPA
- Childline



Civil society interventions

- NGOs implementing the Ujjwala scheme
- NGOs coordinating with AHTUs
- NGOs carrying out rescue and reintegration
- NGOs partnering with Childline implementation
- NGOs facilitating vocational training and rehabilitation of rescued survivors
- NGOs assisting with the implementation of the NCLP (Ibid).
- NGOs carrying out protection programs for runaway children found in streets and railway stations
- NGOs positioned at destination points outside of Assam to rescue and reunify children and women trafficked from Assam
- Student unions and trade/labor unions involved with rescue and advocacy on human trafficking



International interventions

- India-Bangladesh Task Force
- India-Bangladesh MOU on Bilateral Cooperation for Prevention of Human Trafficking in Women and Children, Rescue, Recovery, Repatriation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking
- UNICEF partnered up with various stakeholders to focus on child protection, education, nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and social inclusion

Notable interventions globally

- The Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition (BSSC)
- EU strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

LEVERS OF CHANGE AND THEIR CHALLENGES

LEVERS OF CHANGE

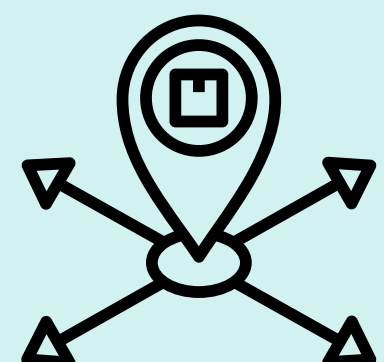
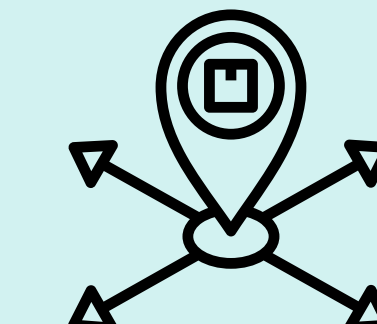
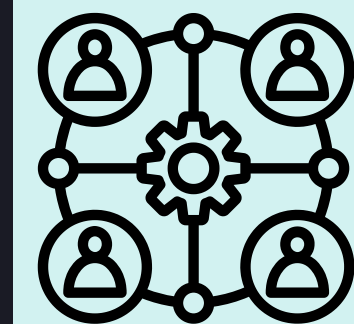
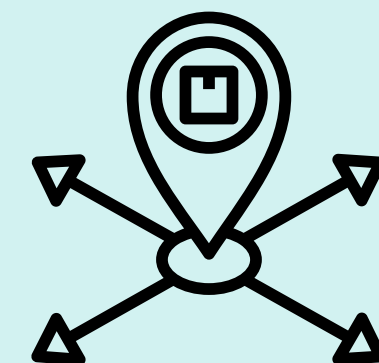
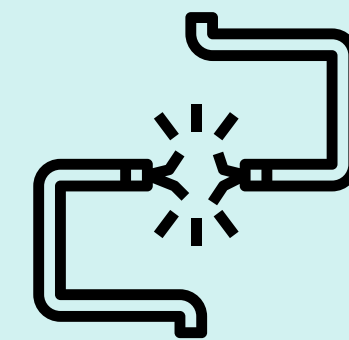
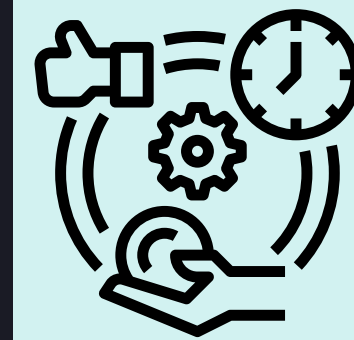
To combat social stigma, civil society organizations need to recognize the worth and imagination of trafficked individuals as value additions for societal development.

Integrate survivors of different social backgrounds and ethnicities in the policymaking and advocacy process to account for their experiential knowledge.

Media reports need to focus on the socio-political factors driving human trafficking in Assam instead of focusing on isolated occurrences of rescue.

State governments need to recognize and fund support groups led by human trafficking survivors as an integral part of the rehabilitation and solution development process.

CHALLENGES



LEGEND



Political constraints



Geographic constraints



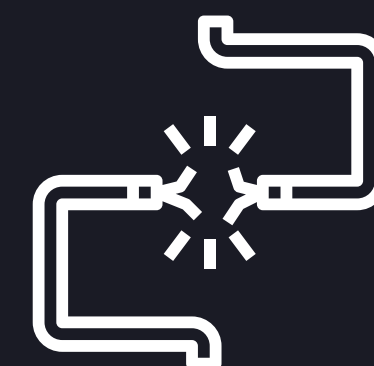
Legislative barriers



Rigid belief systems



Lack of funding



Requiring
institutional
overhaul



Difficulty in implementation



Difficulty in
collaboration &
coordination

Gap 1: Stigma surrounding human trafficking survivors

LEVERS OF CHANGE AND THEIR CHALLENGES

LEVERS OF CHANGE

Ensure legal services to survivors and their families through the district legal services authority.

Conduct capacity building of police deputed in anti-human trafficking cells regarding law enforcement, trafficking laws, and sensitive conduct with survivors and their families.

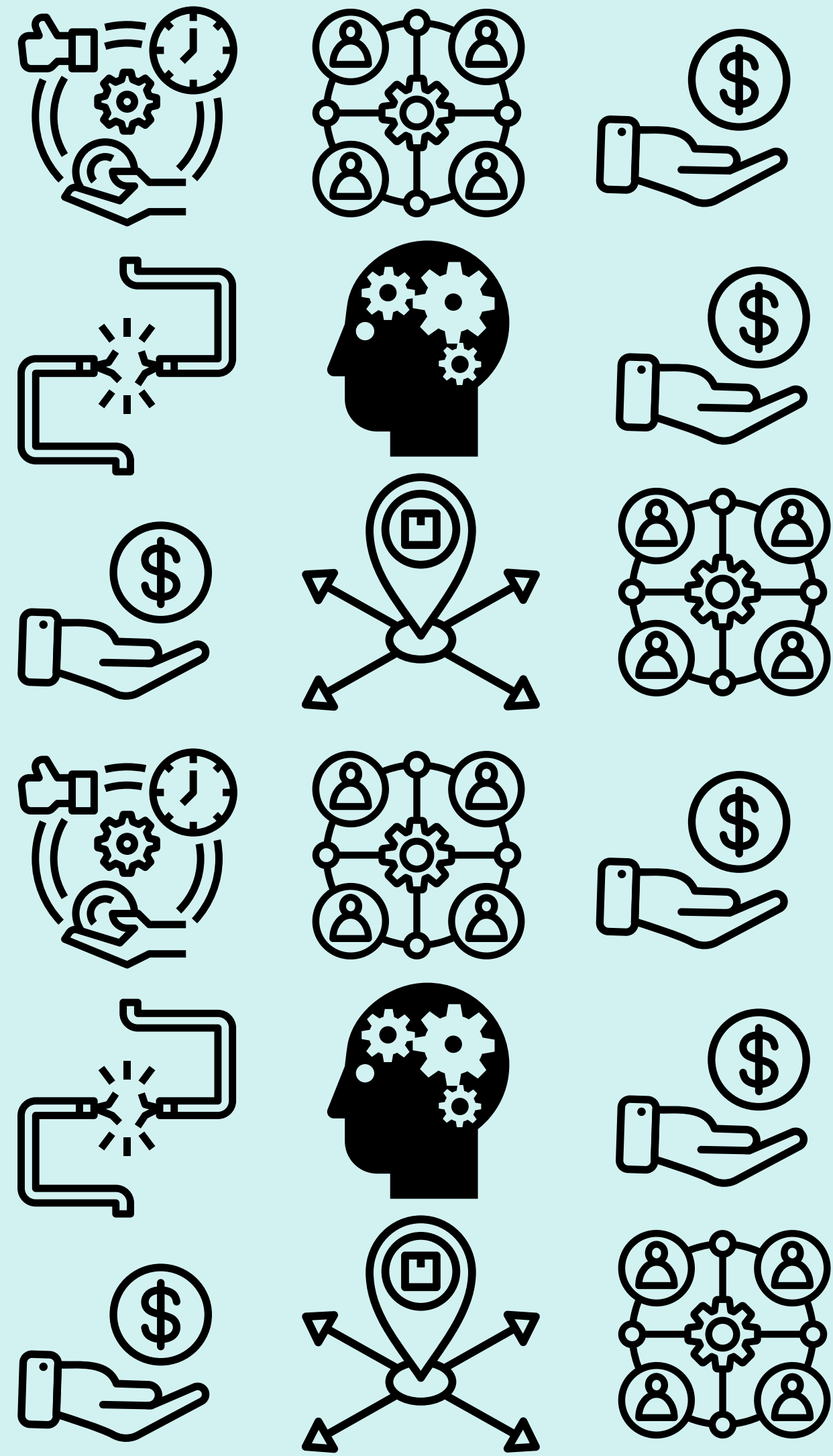
Ensure that anti-human trafficking cells in source districts are operational with better funding from the government.

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CHALLENGES



Gap 2: Insufficient manpower & redressal mechanism

LEVERS OF CHANGE AND THEIR CHALLENGES

LEVERS OF CHANGE

Expand the district-level child protection units to village and block levels. They can submit quarterly reports about police conduct and legal services available for community members.

Conduct regular audits of government-run and funded rehabilitation homes.

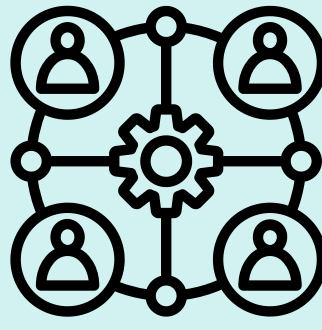
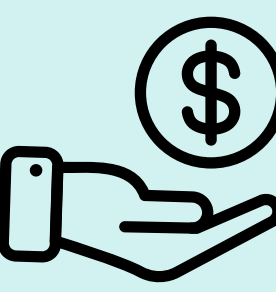
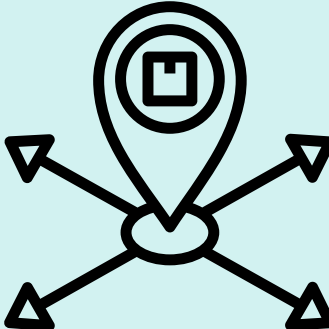
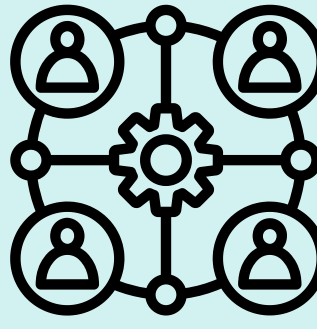
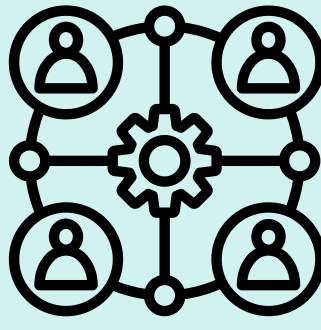
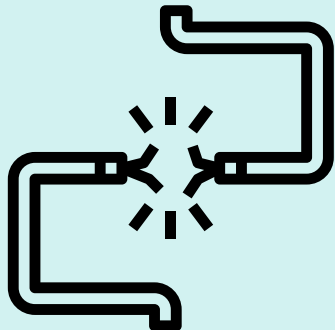
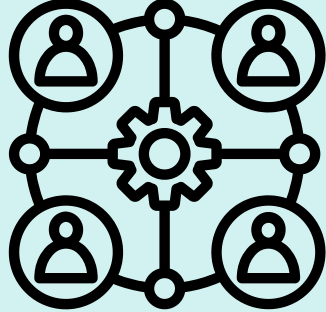
Reduce focus on preventative measures that limit interstate migration and force economically insecure individuals to reside in areas with lacking opportunities.

Enhance transparency of NCRB's human trafficking database with non-state actors.

Collaboration between civil society organizations, media, and research institutions to address the gaps in the Trafficking in Persons Bill 2021 and advocate for a comprehensive law.

Integrate mental health advocates and professionals in the rehabilitation process to provide trauma-sensitive rehabilitation.

CHALLENGES



Gap 3: Lack of collaboration between state & non-state actors

ADDENDUM

VISUAL MAP LINKS

Systems Map: <https://kumu.io/-/734936#map-0c50TevR>

Root Causes Map: <https://kumu.io/-/738321#map-PTRLp190>

Perpetuating Factors Map: <https://kumu.io/-/738321#map-hsZeXahg>

Stakeholder Map: <https://kumu.io/-/738321#map-DLl1XRQd>